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Article Title: Editorial: Changing migration patterns and responses in the context of child and youth forced migration

Year of publication: 2006

Citation: Doná, G.(2006) 'Editorial: Changing migration patterns and responses in the context of child and youth forced migration', International Journal of Migration, Health and Social Care, 2(2) 2-6

Link to published version:

<http://www.metapress.com/content/c78206712062hk85/fulltext.pdf>

DOI: (not stated)

Publisher statement:

http://www.pavpub.com/pavpub/journals/guidelines/HCS_guidelines.pdf

Editorial

Child and Youth Migration: Changing Trends and Responses

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Introduction

In an interdependent world, migration is both symbol and symptom of the way in which individuals and societies inter-relate, a measure of the degree of success or failure in multi-cultural living, transnational relations and social inclusion or exclusion. At the end of 2005, the Global Commission on International Migration published a report, *Migration in an Interconnected World; New Directions for Action*. The report identifies new types of mobility and responses to it, and concludes that international migration is one of the most controversial areas of policy and practice facing almost all countries.

Patterns of migration have changed over time to mirror social and political events and evolving international climates. Castles and Miller (2003) identify five major transformations in global migration trends: the globalisation of migration, which is the tendency for more countries to be crucially affected by migratory movements; the acceleration of migration in volume in all major regions of the world; the differentiation of migration, most countries having not only one type of migrant but a range of types at once; the feminisation of migration, which differs from migratory and refugee movements of the past, which were male-dominated and where women were dealt with under the category of family re-unification; and the growing politicisation of migration.

Focusing on diversity and cohesion of migrants in society, Graeme (2005) identifies additional key features of the new international mobility: replacement of more or less permanent migration by circulation as the dominant paradigm of global migration; emergence of transnationalism and transnational communities and the increasing significance of diasporas and social networks; the importance of spatial dimensions and global cities; increasing polarisation between highly skilled professionals and less advantaged groups; and proliferation of a global immigration industry.

Others have described the emerging phenomenon of 'transit' migration (Papadopoulou, 2005), observed the

asylum-migration nexus (Castles & Loughna, 2005) or expressed concerns about the increase in trafficking and smuggling (Laczko, 2005).

Child and youth migration and changing mobility trends: equal, invisible or marginal?

It is interesting to note the absence, in these general or thematic discussions on migration patterns, of the phenomenon of 'child and youth migration', which continues to occupy a marginal position because children's mobility is still mainly viewed as dependant on that of adults (refugee children) or as atypical (unaccompanied minors or street children). Yet, I would argue, it represents another significant transformation in migration trends, and one that needs to be analysed not in isolation but in relation to these other changing patterns including globalisation, differentiation, trafficking and transnationalism.

There are both empirical and conceptual reasons in support of the proposition that the number of young people moving alone or with their families, the specificity of their migration and of their reasons for moving, constitute an important change in global migration trends. Considering that in many countries of the South children amount to almost half of the country's population (in Bangladesh the number of children under the age of 14 constitutes almost half of the country's population - Unicef, 2000), and taking into consideration that of forty million refugees and displaced people, twenty million are children and young people under the age of 18 (Unicef, 2001), it is surprising that their migratory experience continues to be either separate from or subordinate to rather than inter-related with that of adults.

The migration of children and young people is changing in terms not only of numbers but also of character. New types of child mobility include the experiences of 'parachute kids' (Zhou, 1997) - children 'dropped off' abroad while their immediate family members stay in the home country - unaccompanied and separated minors

seeking protection on their own (Bhabha, 2004) and children who are trafficked or smuggled (Derluyn & Broekaert, 2005). The increase in the number of irregular migrants raises questions about the fate of those irregular migrants who are under 18 or the offspring of irregular migrants. Changing realities in home countries also affect the reasons why children move away from their families or usual places of residence, as in the case of out-migration of orphans in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Booyesen, 2006) or that of street children in the context of socio-political instability (Veale & Doná, 2003).

Changes in the nature of conflict, from inter-state wars to internal strife and ethnic violence, mean that civilians, among them children, have become casualties or direct targets of violence, challenging the classical concept of well-founded fear of persecution under the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. To this point, Bhabha (2004) writes that the implicit assumption that refugees are adults means that threats facing children as political activists in their own right or as members of targeted families are often ignored or trivialised, and that child-specific forms of persecution – such as child abuse, child selling and child trafficking – are not considered to fall within the ambit of the five grounds for persecution: race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group and political opinion.

This Special Issue on children draws attention to the phenomenon of migrating children, viewed as one kind of new mobility whose weight is equal to rather than separate from or subordinate to that of other types of migration. Set against the background of general migration, it focuses on the predicament of those children who are forced to leave their homes because of poverty, crisis, violence or persecution, and to seek protection either internally or abroad. Involuntary migration is of particular significance in post-modern societies, as it is both a threat to, and a product of, the international system of nation states, and therefore exposes fundamental inconsistencies in the ideology that underlies the nation state system (Turton, 2002). It both symbolises and problematises interlinked political, technological, social, cultural and ideological transformations.

Commenting on the relation between forced migration and migration in general, Crawley (2006) criticises the fact

that the Global Commission on Migration considers forced migration only in relation to the asylum-migration nexus, and examines it principally among the challenges of irregular migration, concluding that the exclusion of the really controversial subject constitutes the missing piece of the international migration puzzle. Castles (2003), similarly, views forced migration as an integral part of North-South relationships, and closely linked to global processes of social transformation. To document the experiences of forced migrant children means to engage with divergent and intersecting views of childhood, migration and forced migration that generate new dilemmas and highlight inconsistencies in responses.

Although this issue focuses on forced migrants, similarities and lessons can be drawn about migrant children in general, as the two are closely related. Ackers and Stalford (1999) use the example of intra-community mobility in the European Union to draw attention to the tension inherent in divergent conceptions of children and citizenship which, on the one hand, conceptualise children as the passive appendages of economic agents and, on the other, attempt to recognise their independent status as European citizens. Discussions of the citizenship status of the children of European migrant workers acquire symbolic significance in the evolution of citizenship of the Union. Similarly, discussions about the protection and care of asylum-seeking or separated children acquire symbolic significance for the evolution of migration-welfare considerations for vulnerable children in general.

The migration-welfare nexus: divergent concerns, unequal care

Some of the articles in this Special Issue focus on contentious topics situated at the intersection of what I would call the 'migration-welfare nexus'. They include the predicament of babies of failed asylum seekers, that of young carers and that of young people whose age is disputed or whose legal transition from minor to adult status challenges equality of care provision. The papers render visible those children who are usually invisible under the category 'dependant' or subsumed under the homogenous category 'child'.

In the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, children were not considered in Article 1 defining refugees, nor were their specific concerns

addressed in the main text of the document. Only in the final Act of the Conference that adopted the 1951 Refugee Convention are children mentioned, in their position as dependants. The final Act recommends governments to take the necessary measures for the protection of the refugee's family, especially with a view to:

- ensuring that the unity of the refugee's family is maintained, particularly in cases where the head of the family has fulfilled the necessary conditions for admission to a particular country
- the protection of refugees who are minors, in particular unaccompanied children and girls, with special reference to guardianship and adoption.

In addition to changes in migration patterns, the last 50 years have documented developments in views about children, their rights and entitlements to care, which find embodiment in the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which considers children as independent citizens with entitlements. Unlike the 1951 Refugee Convention, Article 22 of the CRC on refugee children stipulates that:

States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure that a child who is seeking refugee status or who is considered a refugee in accordance with applicable international or domestic law and procedures shall, whether unaccompanied or accompanied by his or her parents or by any other person, receive appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance in the enjoyment of applicable rights set forth in the present Convention and in other international human rights and humanitarian instruments to which the said States are Parties.

The papers contained in this Special Issue engage with matters arising at the intersection of evolving under-18 mobility trends and changing socio-political environments. The latter are characterised by increased complexity and bureaucratisation of policies and procedures, often result in two-tier systems of protection where some individuals are 'deserving' and others become 'undeserving' (Sales, 2002), are driven by 'harmonised restrictionism' in the European context

(Joly, 1996, 2002) and are dominated by security concerns and the securitisation of migration, a phenomenon that Ibrahim (2005) describes as racism's most modern form.

The papers in the Issue poignantly converge to show the existing tension in the welfare-migration nexus between 'deserving and undeserving' and 'inclusion and exclusion'. When migration concerns take precedence over welfare considerations, the end result is unequal care provision. What they also indicate is that migration management creates a specific type of tension, one characterised by a re-temporalisation of migration (Doná, 2006), where migrants in general and forced migrants in particular are confined to live in limbo, waiting for a decision on their application, or for an appeal, or for the end of their time-limited protection, or the end of their status as a minor. This phenomenon is more poignant in the case of young migrants, who are projected towards the future and whose development, as some of the case studies show, risks being hampered by social and political concerns that have more to do with short-term migration management concerns than with long-term child welfare considerations.

The papers in the Special Issue also offer suggestions which, though expressed differently, can be summarised as multi-layered, holistic and participatory. Listening to the 'beneficiaries' in the acquisition of information, implementation of programmes and development of policies is generally advocated. Equally important, the need to rethink the nexus between migration and welfare is highlighted in order to move towards conceptually integrated and multi-layered approaches. How this is to be done is a challenge for continuous discussion, one that calls for a reconsideration and reconciliation of what appear to be divergent concerns within migration and welfare agencies.

Overview of individual papers

The Special Issue on children covers legal and political issues, as well as research and practice. It deals with legislative and social policies related to access to maternity health care and social care provision, recommendations, examples of good practice and methodological issues in research with children. It also analyses the experiences and challenges of children from birth to the legal or cultural transition into adulthood in various contexts of internal

mobility, exile and post-conflict reconstruction, highlighting the link between social environments and well-being.

More specifically, Lane and Tribe discuss policies and practices for the provision of care and protection for asylum-seeking children in the United Kingdom. They show how separated asylum-seeking children are cared for under different sections of the law, which often results in inconsistencies in support that lead to unequal care, especially for three groups of children most at risk: those whose age is disputed and may be held in detention centres, those who have been trafficked, and those older children located in bed and breakfast without emotional, legal or practical support. The introduction of a new asylum model, which the UK Government is in the process of developing, will define children as a distinctive group of claimants; the effects of these changes are unclear and need monitoring. The authors conclude by suggesting ways in which holistic, multi-agency approaches and dual planning – both in assessment and in intervention – form a basis for meeting children's and young people's needs, aspirations and wishes.

While Lane and Tribe set the general context for understanding the intricacies of social care provisions for asylum-seeking children in the United Kingdom, Gaudion, McLeish and Homeyard bring attention to a complex, controversial and under-researched issue in child protection and child health: what happens to babies, pregnant asylum-seeking mothers and new families when their claim for asylum has been unsuccessful and they are unable or unwilling to return to their countries of origin? Focusing on the impact of a recent change in United Kingdom legislation that has added 'failed' asylum seekers to the categories of people who should be charged for health care in hospitals, the authors highlight the discrepancy between intentions and implementation, the effects that the legislation has on asylum-seeking families' access to health care and the wider impact on black and minority ethnic communities. Restricted access to health care, withdrawal of financial and housing support, and limited maternity care for mothers and babies in removal (detention) centres converge to support the authors' argument that the strategic objective of controlling immigration takes precedence over the welfare of some of the most vulnerable children in the UK, leading the authors to conclude that some children seem to matter less than others.

The papers by Doná and Jones are methodological in focus, but contain observations that may be of use to policy makers and care providers. The first discusses children's participation in research when investigating the lives of children living in difficult circumstances. Specifically, it describes the involvement of children as research advisors in two projects: a study of foster care for separated children in Rwanda, and an analysis of the conditions of children outside parental care living in institutions and communities in Bangladesh. The author argues for the need to systematise, as part of a study's research strategy, a 'methodology of participation' that considers varieties of participation and varieties of social changes. The second is a report of a workshop on the methodology and ethics of working with street children, part of a study exploring the multiple childhoods and identities of Mexican 'street children'. Street ethnography, the methodological framework for the project, is summarised, and four ethical guiding principles for working with street children are identified: protection, consent, confidentiality and involvement. Both contributions point to the value of involving and listening to children, and this is echoed by comments made by children themselves in Leadbitter's account of an international symposium held in Kenya for practitioners and policy specialists on the needs of young carers.

Speaking at the symposium, young carers from African countries and the UK voiced the challenges they face when caring for family members, and advanced recommendations that would assist them to have a normal life while continuing to care. From the symposium, lessons can be learnt for improving the lives of young carers from refugee and asylum-seeking families in exile who have to look after and worry about a family member who is disabled or unwell in a strange culture, unfamiliar surroundings and often a new language. The effects of caring in exile alongside the stigma and unsettlement of being a refugee or asylum seeker compound each other. The report recommends that good practice guidelines for refugee and asylum-seeking care providers be developed and promoted in order to reduce the risk that care will fall to the young people in these families. Together with the other papers, the report examines some of the challenges related to migration status and care provision, and makes recommendations for the social inclusion of children whose developmental and social rights vary.

Similar issues were also considered at the 4th Forced Migration Postgraduate Student Conference held at the University of East London in March 2006, whose theme was Refugees: Questions of Inclusion and Exclusion, and which offers the opportunity to hear about the work of emerging researchers in the field of forced migration. Mecham's report of the conference questions the extent to which we may have entered an era of restriction for refugees through interdiction, detention and protracted residence in camps, and the effects that it may have on migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Many interesting papers were presented at the conference, and some titles complement the papers of this issue on children with presentations on the treatment of young refugees and their transition to independent living in receiving countries, state responsibility for the forcible return of separated asylum-seeking children, inclusive education for refugee children and the wider question of access to health care. A useful reference to the website where copies of individual presentations can be found is provided in the report, for those interested in pursuing specific papers.

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